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THE ARAB SUMMIT ON LEBANON

ANNCR:

THE ARAB SUMMIT CONFERENCE IN CAIRO IS TACKLING THE CENTRAL ISSUE FACING IT--THE MAKEUP OF THE PEACE-KEEPING FORCE IT HOPES WILL MOVE INTO LEBANON SOON. NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS.

VOICE:

BY AND LARGE, THE FIRST DAY OF THE CONFERENCE--MONDAY-- GOT OFF TO A GOOD START. THERE WAS ALMOST UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT ON THE CREATION OF A THIRTY-THOUSAND MAN ARAB PEACE-KEEPING FORCE FOR LEBANON, A COUNTRY NOW DEVASTATED AFTER CLOSE TO NINETEEN MONTHS OF CIVIL WAR. IRAQ WAS THE ONLY ARAB STATE OBJECTING.

THE PEACE-KEEPING FORCE IS THE CENTER PIECE OF THE SO-CALLED RIYADH PLAN, WORKED OUT LAST WEEK BY THE HEADS OF STATE OF EGYPT, SYRIA, SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT, LEBANON AND THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION. THE JOB FACING THE PROJECTED PEACE-KEEPING FORCE IS THREE-FOLD--TO SUPERVISE THE UNEASY TRUCE IN LEBANON; TO COLLECT HEAVY WEAPONS FROM THE WARRING LEBANESE FACTIONS AND TO OVERSEE THEIR DISENGAGEMENT.

IRAQ OBJECTS TO THE PRESENCE OF SYRIAN TROOPS IN LEBANON AND WANTS THEM EXCLUDED FROM THE PEACE-KEEPING FORCE OR AT LEAST SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED. ANOTHER NEW ELEMENT WAS INJECTED INTO THE LEBANON PEACE SEARCH, WHEN THE FOREIGN MINISTERS AGREED TO INCLUDE THE SITUATION IN ISRAELI-OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES IN THEIR DISCUSSIONS.

THE TONE OF THE OPENING DAY'S SPEECHES BY PRESIDENT SADAT OF EGYPT AND PRESIDENT ASSAD OF SYRIA LEFT LITTLE DOUBT AS TO THE SENSE OF URGENCY THAT IS FELT IN CAIRO. BOTH ARAB LEADERS STOOD

FIRM IN STATING THAT THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THE ISSUE OF PEACE IN LEBANON. INDEED, THE NEAR-UNANIMITY REACHED ON THE FIRST DAY IN ACCEPTING THE RIYADH PLAN UNDERLINES THAT URGENCY. AT THE HEART OF IT IS THE REALIZATION BY THE ARAB WORLD THAT CONTINUED DIVISIONS AMONG ITS COMPONENTS CAN ONLY WEAKEN ITS POSITION BEFORE THE REST OF THE WORLD IN ANY EVENTUAL RESOLUTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION.

FOR CONTINUED RIVALRY AMONG SUCH ARAB STATES AS IRAQ AND TUNISIA ON THE ONE HAND AND SYRIA ON THE OTHER CAN ONLY DEEPEN THE DIVISIONS IN A UNITED ARAB FRONT.

IN ANY CASE, THE INITIAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE RIYADH PLAN IN MANY WAYS SUGGESTS A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH IN THE ARAB POSITION ON THE LEBANESE SITUATION. SOME MONTHS AGO IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE ARAB HEADS OF STATE ASSEMBLED IN CAIRO WOULD NOT ONLY APPROVE BUT AGREE TO PAY FOR A LEBANESE CEASE-FIRE BASED ON A CONTINUED SYRIAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN LEBANON. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THE MAINTENANCE OF THE ARAB PEACE-KEEPING FORCE WILL COST MANY THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS A MONTH. THAT SUM COULD BECOME PROHIBITIVE IF THE PEACE-KEEPING FORCE IS PREVENTED FROM COMPLETING ITS TASK WITHIN A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME.

FOR THESE REASONS, THE DECISION TAKEN ON MONDAY IN CAIRO BY THE FOREIGN MINISTERS IS SEEN HERE IN WASHINGTON AND OTHER CAPITALS AROUND THE WORLD AS AN ENCOURAGING BEGINNING TO THE ARAB SUMMIT. WHETHER THE HEADS OF STATE ARE WILLING TO BUILD ON THAT BEGINNING IS NOW IN THEIR HANDS AS THEY CONSIDER THE DETAILS INVOLVED IN THE RIYADH PLAN.

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